

# SANTA BARBARA

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Dr. Carey Stanton's  
**SANTA CRUZ  
ISLAND**

Antique Planes  
and their Pilots  
Informal Interviews:  
Hart and Lagomarsino  
Community Arts  
Music Association





**F**rom the mainland, one finds it difficult to gain a clear perspective of Santa Cruz Island. One minute the island appears close enough to touch, the next minute it disappears, obscured by fog. Occasionally, the fog will cluster at its center, creating the illusion of two separate islands.

One of the eight Channel Islands, Santa

Cruz has sat approximately 25 miles off the coast, facing Santa Barbara, for untold eons. However, for much of its recent history, Santa Cruz has seemed an isolated island that faces only inward.

For the last 30 years, 90 percent of this 62,000-acre island, which is four times the size of Manhattan, was in the private control of a private man—a man who

shunned publicity both for himself and his island, a man who dedicated his life to protecting and preserving the island and a way of life.

In single-minded pursuit of this passion, he produced an atmosphere of paradox that has often been as difficult to pierce as the island fog. For instance, he generously made Santa Cruz available to some visitors, as he did to inner-city children, bringing them to the island just so

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*Once upon a time, it was the  
personal realm of a private man—Dr. Carey Stanton*

# Santa Cruz Island

By Jeff Sanders  
Photography by Jürgen Hilmer



they could experience nature. But he also zealously denied access to others, as in the case of Jean-Michel Cousteau, whom he forbade to film on the island. Some people describe Stanton as an eccentric, a megalomaniac, a difficult man. Others laud him as an exemplary conservationist, historian and gentleman. Most of his friends and acquaintances use both kinds of images when remembering this unusual man, this island baron.

When Dr. Carey Stanton died last December, an era died with him. Nevertheless, as ownership of the largest

privately held island off the continental U.S. changed hands, Stanton's legacy—his vision—remains. And if we wish to comprehend that vision, we must understand the island's history.

At least as long as eight thousand years ago, Chumash Indians and their predecessors inhabited Santa Cruz Island. Anthropologists estimate that when Cabrillo sailed through in 1542, the Chumash population numbered over one thousand.

Not until 1769 did the native Indians' next significant contact with the Spanish take place, when the seagoing portion of the Portolá expedition gave

the island its name. Two ships supported the Portolá expedition, and one of those, under the command of Juan Pérez, stopped at the island. A priest who accompanied the landing party discovered later that he had left his walking staff on shore. Since the staff had an iron cross attached, and iron was a valuable trade item to the Chumash, the party assumed that the priest's staff was lost. When a group of Indians paddled out to the ship to return the staff, the Spaniards commemorated the gesture by calling the island *La Isla de la Santa Cruz* ("Island of the Holy Cross").

In later years, the Spanish would reward the natives' kindness by forcibly removing all of them to the mainland.

Mission records



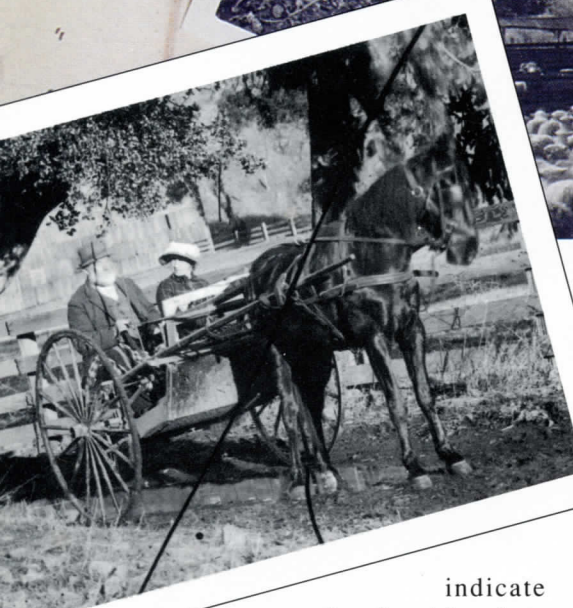


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Good worker  
To be satisfied  
Discontented  
Value  
Would have been discharged  
Good man  
Gone dissatisfied with his  
Good worker; left to find  
Medium worker; not  
Gone dissatisfied with  
Good sailor, may be  
Did not want her



Andre Castellero, the recipient of a Mexican land grant, became the first private owner of Santa Cruz Island in 1839. However, the development of the island as we know it today began in 1869, when Frenchman Justinian Caire, and nine other investors, formed the Santa Cruz Island Company. Eventually, Caire became the sole owner, and in an amazingly brief span of only seventeen years beginning in 1880, he constructed the chapel and al-

Caire developed a working ranch with thousands of sheep and cattle. He also planted a vineyard and set up a winery that functioned until the advent of Prohibition. That winery drew several hundred

The winery workers were not the only Italian influences on the island; Caire's wife Albina was Italian, and, so the story goes, she longed for the country of her birth. To assuage her homesickness, Caire planted a grove of magnificent Italian Stone Pines on a hillside that Albina could easily see from her bedroom balcony.

Los Angeles businessman Edwin Stanton purchased Santa Cruz Island in 1937 for an estimated one million dollars. He acquired all but the eastern one-tenth of the island, which the Gherini family, Caire's great-grandchildren, retained.

Stanton immediately set about revitalizing the sheep operation, but after two years decided to concentrate his efforts on the cattle herds. Although he successfully managed to run a nineteenth-century *ranch*o in the twentieth century, Edwin Stanton would be remembered ultimately for his appreciation of history and his recognition of the need to preserve that history. The task of documenting the island's history and protecting its unique, fragile en-



## Santa Cruz Island

*The coin of this island realm was the fischas, pictured at left. Justinian Caire paid sheep shearers in fischas, which the workers could use as currency in the island's commissary. Stamped from sheets of brass, the coins were issued in two sizes: dime-sized for docile or smaller sheep, quarter-sized for larger, unruly sheep. The fischas and a photograph of one of the sheep shearers sit on top of ranch records, where one can note an entry for Pietro Olivari, who lived and worked on the island for 60 years. Buried in the island chapel's cemetery, Olivari bequeathed \$5,000 to Carey Stanton. After Olivari's death, Stanton obtained permission and moved the remains of Olivari's parents from a mainland cemetery to lie by their son's side.*



and stallion barn, a large horse barn and a chapel.

Surrounded by the natural beauty of the island and its almost palpable history, Carey Stanton enthusiastically accepted his role as steward of the island. From the beginning, Carey Stanton perceived that part of his role centered on defending the island from intruders. Several dramatic stories emerged during the Stanton occupation of the island that depict Stanton's vehement protection of his privacy. For example, while inspecting a cove, Stanton came across a large bag of trash that a visiting boat had left. He went through the trash bit by bit until he came across some papers bearing the name of a well-known Ventura yacht broker. On his next trip to the mainland, Stanton brought with him the by-then very ripe bag. He drove to the yacht broker's office and deposited the sack on the man's desk, explaining that he was returning the broker's property. The point was well taken.

In desiring to educate the public about island courtesy, Edwin Stanton may have been his son's source of inspiration. As another story goes, Edwin ran across a couple sitting on the island's shore, checkered tablecloth spread, enjoying a

*Justinian Caire and his daughter Delphine, circa 1890, far left, took a ride in a Petaluma cart that remains on the island today. The photo, taken by Caire's son Arthur, was reproduced here from a broken glass plate. Above, Carey has a little lamb in 1937, the year his father purchased the island. Below, although its original winemaking equipment has been removed, the winery building looks as it did in the 1890s.*

vironment later became the mission of Edwin Stanton's son Carey.

**I**n 1957, six years before his father Edwin's death, Dr. Carey Stanton returned to Santa Cruz Island to live and work. After earning a medical degree from Stanford, he practiced medicine in the New York area for ten years, but returned to assume an active role in the island's operation.

When Carey Stanton arrived on the island, the main ranch consisted of eighteen buildings, all of which remain standing today. Carey Stanton moved into the Justinian House, a two-story adobe built in the 1880s and originally used as the ranch superintendent's living quarters. Carey's parents, Edwin and Evelyn, lived in the Phoenix House, a single-story building erected in 1950 and so named because it rose out of the ashes of a previous fire. Other buildings include a sheep-shearing shed, a slaughterhouse, two winery buildings, two bunkhouses, a small milk cow





picnic, their boat anchored just offshore. When the couple could not produce a landing permit, Edwin Stanton informed them that they were trespassing and asked them to leave. The man, a prominent Santa Barbara antique dealer, protested that he and his wife were doing nothing wrong and that they should be allowed to continue their lunch. Once again Edwin Stanton asked them to depart. When he next visited Santa Barbara, the elder Stanton went with picnic basket in hand to the antique dealer's shop, and proceeded to spread a tablecloth in the middle of the store and to enjoy his lunch. He, too, made his point.

In addition to defending the island, Carey Stanton began a set of acquisitions that together represent the only such collection in the world. Almost immediately after his arrival on the island, he began to fill both the Justinian House and the Phoenix House with outstanding examples of antique furniture and early American silver. Many of these pieces are now worth a great deal. For example, one piece, a Chapin "chest-on-chest," has an estimated value of \$200,000. Nonetheless, interspersed among the exquisite antiques are examples of island furniture, rough-hewn tables, desks and chairs that island workers made. The presence of these pieces

speaks of Stanton's commitment to Santa Cruz Island, its traditions and its history.

An avid bibliophile, Stanton assembled an impressive, 5,000-volume library of books dealing with the Channel Islands. With the help of Marla Daily, he catalogued each book and compiled an extensive cross-reference that noted which pages of each book mention Santa Cruz Island. A historian, naturalist, author and Channel Islands Associate at the Santa Barbara Museum of Natural History, Daily has documented the natural and cultural histories of all eight of the Channel Islands.

But the books are only a small part of Stanton's island collection. He amassed



*Set in a long valley, the main ranch is protected on all sides by the island's gently sloping, buff-colored hills. The large building at left is the horse barn; at the far right sits the island chapel. The main residences and the pool appear in the foreground.*



thousands of photographs and maps of the island—some drawn by a young James Abbott McNeill Whistler, some dating back to the mid-1800s. In addition, he continued to maintain detailed ranch records that portrayed daily life on Santa Cruz Island. The earliest records date back to the early 1880s and chronicle the off-shore cattle operation as well as the winery's seasonal activity. The winery records—many of which are written in Italian—preserve the names of seasonal workers, where they came from, how well they worked and whether or not they were acceptable for hire the following year. In addition, the handwritten books record

the winery's production and the destination of every puncheon (cask) of wine ever produced on the island. Ranch records preserve the names of the ranch hands as well as their salaries and duties. Other books catalogue a century of rainfall and weather statistics. With the aid of these remarkably complete records, Stanton faithfully carried on these traditions and delved into the island's past.

Keeping records seems to have been Stanton's passion. He catalogued each piece of furniture, each artwork, each piece of silver, often taping all the documentation regarding the piece on or near the item. For instance, a small gun room in the

Justinian House holds a Wells Fargo desk, an island-made desk and table, and a rack of modern and antique rifles, including some Winchesters dating from 1894. Tucked in one of the desk's cubbyholes is a typewritten sheet of paper that describes each of the rifles. The entry for the sixth gun from the left reads: "Austrian rifle—supposedly model from Franco-Prussian War. This rifle was taken from an Austrian fisherman who was caught poaching on the Island."

But Stanton's preservation of island traditions and history did not stop with collecting books and keeping impeccable records. Over the years, he developed a

## Santa Cruz Island





*Over the years, Stanton developed a personal mission to acquire anything having to do with Santa Cruz Island—from original artwork to farm equipment.*



*The reference library upstairs in the Justinian House, at right, held only part of Stanton's 5,000-volume collection of books dealing with Santa Cruz Island.*



personal mission to acquire anything having to do with Santa Cruz Island—from original artwork to farm equipment that had once been used on the island. When employed as Stanton's assistant, Daily was under general orders to help him in this mission. She once noticed a photograph in the *Santa Barbara News-Press* that pictured two men operating an old-fashioned fruit press. The photo's caption noted that the press had once been used on Santa Cruz. After a bit of detective work, Daily located the press and put Stanton in touch with its owner. The man gave the press to Stanton, who returned it to its rightful home—Santa Cruz Island.

Stories like this one abound. In his quest for anything to do with the island, Stanton acquired paintings created by California masters, most of which depict island set-



## Santa Cruz Island



*The formal living room, at left, as it appeared in the Phoenix House, contained rare and exquisite pieces. In the far left corner sits the Chapin "chest-on-chest." In front of it stood an eighteenth-century English walnut gaming table and couches and chairs upholstered with Fortuny fabric; the mantle held Japanese Imari and Kutani porcelains; and over the fireplace hung a William Hahn painting titled "Mexican Cattle Drives," 1881. The foundation has removed almost all of these pieces to the mainland. Above, still standing in the formal dining room of the Justinian House is a valuable Brainerd chest on top of which sits part of Stanton's silver collection.*

tings. Paintings by Alexander Francis Harmer, Carl Oscar Borg and Richard Diebenkorn highlight the collection.

The Diebenkorn paintings, numbering about three dozen, represent a rare body of work. Diebenkorn, a friend of Stanton since they were roommates at Stanford, painted at the island over many years. Few of his Santa Cruz paintings have ever been exhibited or photographed.

Friendship has played a major role in the story of Santa Cruz Island. Many of Carey Stanton's friendships, like that with Richard Diebenkorn, extended back 30 or more years. Most of Stanton's closest friends would inevitably contribute something of themselves to the island.

In addition to the paintings he created on or of the island, Diebenkorn also created the Santa Cruz Island flag. The flag

that flies both at the ranch and the Santa Barbara breakwater features a white cross on a hill, the traditional symbol for the island, bordered by blue for the sea and sky, and green for the land.

The island brought new friends to Stanton, like rock-and-roller and former Eagle Joe Walsh, actress/activist Jane Fonda and Assemblyman Tom Hayden, whom few would envision as personal friends of the politically conservative Carey Stanton. However, it was the island, not politics, that provided the common ground.

For Joe Walsh, whom Marla Daily introduced to Stanton, Santa Cruz Island would become tied to his life in two highly personal ways: he was married on the island, and his daughter was baptized there. Walsh became so convinced that this spot of special beauty should be safeguarded

that when the Nature Conservancy began to raise funds to purchase Santa Cruz, he and the Eagles played a concert at the Los Angeles Forum to benefit the island.

Before his death in 1987, Stanton last made the island available to the children of Jane Fonda and Tom Hayden's Laurel Springs Ranch. Many of the children came from inner-city environments where open space is a vacant building and where there is little opportunity for them to experience nature. In the process of providing that experience, a friendship developed between Stanton and the famous couple.

Hayden remembers Stanton as a man who delighted in joining the kids around the campfire: "He'd tell [the kids] stories, and he was just eccentric enough and funny enough for them to relate to. I think they thought of him as just another camper.



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Of course he was a camper who owned his own island. He seemed to get a lot of pleasure by being able to open a door on a world of nature for the kids."

Usually awkward with children, Stanton was obviously touched by the experience. He framed and placed prominently inside the island's chapel a thank-you letter written in Spanish by one of the campers—the child of a migrant worker.

Did Stanton ever discuss politics with Fonda or Hayden? "A few times," Hayden says. "Stanton once jokingly remarked, 'If only my good Republican friends knew who my guests were tonight.'"

Nonetheless, not all of Stanton's friends were artists, actresses, politicians or rock stars. Jonathan Brown, whose twin brother worked on Stanton's ranch, also spent

time on the island. "I just felt privileged to be invited into that environment to watch the island move from the cowboy era to the modern world," Brown says.

When asked about the seemingly contradictory ways in which Carey Stanton dealt with the public, Brown is quick to answer, "Carey was always generous with the island, but you have to imagine the responsibility of running an operation that would stretch on the mainland from Goleta to Ventura. Also, [Stanton] was a private person. He hated publicity, which is why Cousteau was denied entry."

Marla Daily agrees with Brown, saying that the decision to refuse Cousteau's request to film was based on Stanton's firm belief that "the fewer people who

*Continued on page 58*



**Justinian Caire** built the island's chapel in 1891; Carey Stanton later surrounded the chapel with the family cemetery and island-made wrought iron. The chapel's interior, above, features gilded stars concentrically placed on a ceiling of pale blue. At right, for a joke, Carey Stanton once posed on his own grave.



MARLA DAILY





**Santa Cruz Island**

